



AESOP Head of Department Meeting
Towards professional recognition for the planning profession in Europe

14 April 2007
Leuven, Belgium

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¹ ECTP: European Council of Town Planners

² APERAU: French National Association of Planning Schools

³ ACSP: Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (North America)

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Accreditation, what it means to member schools, and the role AESOP
has to play

Peter Ache
AESOP President

This short paper brings together in writing the introductory statement, which I provided for the Heads of Departments Meeting in Leuven, and some of the major conclusions of the Leuven meeting which AESOP will include further on in its agenda. The final part of this paper documents the recommendations which the past and current presidents of AESOP agreed upon in their meeting advancing the Heads of Departments meeting.

Before going into the matter I think it is safe to say that this second meeting of Heads of Departments was very successful: the intensive discussions in the working groups have clearly shown that the schools are not only highly aware of the immediate challenges resulting from discussions about professional standards, but that there are also many ideas on how to respond in our main task, the education of future planning professionals.

AESOP will provide a forum for the further development of these ideas, will act on quality assurance, accreditation and professional standards and will provide further active support to its member schools.

Our action points therefore include,

- setting up a working party (preferably jointly with ECTP and ISOCARP);
- defining a policy regarding quality assurance, accreditation, and professional standards;
- continuing our internal debate on before items; and
- continuing the preparatory work which was done on the Bologna-Theme and on Research Assessment.

The Changing Landscape of Planning

The topic of the Leuven meeting, towards professional recognition for the planning discipline in Europe, has several dimensions: In Bratislava (2006) we provided the first results regarding the Bologna-Process and the adaptation of schools towards the two cycle system. Our concern here lies with quality assurance – a perspective which looks towards the inside of our schools and the education. One aspect which followed on from the discussions in Bratislava related to accreditation and the role AESOP can play in this respect, e.g. providing orientation for the elaboration of programmes or defining core qualifications which need to be achieved in individual programmes ⁴. With the new topic of professional regulation the perspective now widens to the external environment and includes also other actors, in particular other professions in the same field. All these elements and perspectives need to be integrated in a proper discussion. However, all these perspectives are embedded in an environment, which poses several additional challenges to planning

- it is an increasingly competitive environment, demanding a proliferation of products;
- the market⁵ clearly changes;
- an indication of the quality of the commodity becomes important;
- potentially, the market will be regulated, and
- AESOP needs to define a position – whether our schools want to act as the

⁴ But also including the theme of research assessment and the assurance of quality output in research terms. The need of an AESOP quality mark e.g. for journals, or in fact a closer and direct cooperation with individual journals is one important point of our discussions. See also further down.

⁵ The market terminology is deliberately chosen in order to further emphasise the dominating character of these changes and to induce discussion. Personally, I do not share this approach towards a 'commodification' of education.

middleman, the assembly line or the innovator?

We now understand the “products” we are delivering in a better way because of the investigation AESOP has done in the Bologna Survey⁶. From the sample which was collected, it appears that the larger part of the planning schools is ‘on track’ with the implementation of the Bologna process. However, some questions can be asked which revolve around issues of academic traditions and diversity. The first one being that education should not simply be understood as a product which is placed in a competitive environment. In his vicious critique regarding the ‘knowledge society’ Konrad Liessmann⁷ at one point comments on the trend to turn universities into efficiently managed production sites of human capital for the knowledge society as follows: “It is not the worker who becomes the scientist, it is rather the scientist becoming the worker. If it was different, one would turn businesses into universities and not universities into businesses.” How can we maintain cultures and different traditions but also avoid ossification? Planning, understood as a practice which is to achieve spatial quality, and planners, understood as having the capacity to situate and contextualise, develop and manage planning projects in an appropriate way and to achieve and realise satisfactory solutions in participative processes (Conclusions, Presidents Meeting, Leuven), can not be achieved by an overly harmonized education.

Regarding the demand side the potential ‘markets’ change, too. In a report on the importance of metropolitan regions the OECD (2006)⁸ formulated the following view on planning: “The role of planning is not to dictate what goes where, rather, when linked to expenditure on infrastructure and to policies and programmes for SMEs, housing, education, health and the like, flexible spatial planning strategies can help to leverage private investment and civic involvement. These challenges however are difficult, given the inherited professional specialisations in the public and private sectors that deliver space-based services and goods” The OECD calls for more flexible and strategic versions of planning, including e.g. ‘public visioning under market conditions’ as actually a positive venture. First of all, this quote tells us much about the still existing perception of planning in the minds of free market promoters.

⁶ AESOP (2006). Implications of the Bologna Process for Planning Education in Europe. Results of the 2006 survey. (Authors: Davoudi/Ellison).

⁷ Liessmann, K. (2006). Theorie der Unbildung. Wien, Zsolnay. Liessmann uses the German term ‘Wissender’ (more knowing) but for our discussion the ‘scientist’ might be more appropriate.

⁸ OECD (2006). Competitive cities in the global economy - horizontal synthesis report. Bilbao.

Secondly however, it informs us about expectations for future professional performance as a planner which we need to prepare our graduates for: strategic thinking, visioning, multi-disciplinary teams and services. Part of this is already good practice in the education.

The quality of the product is actually difficult to measure in a generally applicable way. There is an inherited professionalism of planning practice and research in different countries. We all know the yard sticks applied to various aspects of the production system, on institutional as well as on individual level – evaluation, benchmarking, rankings in research, teaching and in terms of services to society (a more recent element). AESOP needs to learn more about the application of these instruments from member schools and exchange this knowledge. A particular new field here is that of accreditation experiences. The member schools make their first (or repeated) experiences here and as it was clearly expressed in Bratislava, AESOP is asked to play a more active but also critical role in such endeavours – not to leave it entirely to professional consultants earning considerable amounts of money with the process. As said before, one element regards research assessment and in particular the identification of journals which are important for our profession – up to the point of embracing journals as official AESOP journals (as TCPA, RTPI and other bodies have already). Preferably and ideally, AESOP finds a multi-lingual journal – to make sure that our various languages do not lose definitional power over important societal developments in the face of an all too dominant anglo-american publication sector.

In the opening of the Leuven meeting we discussed the potential threat (or opportunity) of a coming market regulation for the planning profession. The definition of standards, procedures, representation rights is for sure an important issue. As we learnt, the issue is less dramatic as thought for a moment⁹. However, AESOP should not slacken on the issue.

In terms of accreditation and related activities, AESOP can take on different roles:

- Coordination of planning curricula;
- Facilitation, support and promotion of exchange;
- Quality assurance;
- Elaboration of standards;
- External evaluation in accreditation processes;

⁹ See the presentation of Anna Geppert, AESOP secretary general at the AESOP HoD meeting in Leuven, 14-04-07.

- Setting admission criteria (international students); and
- Seeking active involvement as professional body in coming EC Regulation Processes.

Each of these points is very valid, but some of them need a wider debate¹⁰ in order to determine what AESOP should do. One thing is certain: AESOP needs to take a very clear standpoint on these issues. AESOP ideally takes the position of the innovator and promoter of planning and is not content with a position as mediator or manager of an 'assembly line'.

Conclusions and AESOP agenda

To resume the challenges for AESOP, I first would like to recall some of the criteria which have been defined in our charter. Planners should develop an attitude i.e. a feeling for planning: being oriented towards solving the needs of society within a framework of sustainable development; the cultural embeddedness of the man-made environment; the value dimension of planning; and the ethical implications of planning. These are still valid points which we apply to our members in the application process and which direct our efforts to establish and promote a European planning profession. However there is the need to discuss and up-date these and other criteria to better reflect some of the changes which have been identified before, potentially culminating in an 'AESOP declaration' of planning.

A certain number of recommendations concerning the future of AESOP, in the light of the challenges developed above, can be formulated:

- AESOP needs to develop a strategy or a policy which helps strengthening the profile of planning, communicating the value of planning, and preparing a common platform.
- AESOP should also attempt to define core (minimum) requirements for planners, but in a non-cumulative way (referring to excessive lists of qualifications).

As said at the outset, the president together with the ExCo and CoRep will closer cooperate with bodies like ECTP and ISOCARP on the common platform issue, will set up various working parties on the relevant matters, and will continue the ground work (continuing the Bologna survey and research assessment).

¹⁰ This debate has been engaged at the AESOP HoD meeting in Leuven, 14-04-07, see the report by Roelof Verhage.

Recommendation

In their Leuven meeting on the invitation of Professor Louis Albrechts, the group of AESOP past and current presidents came to the following conclusions and recommendations:

- 1) AESOP is the only representational body which brings together the planning schools in Europe. Given this unique position AESOP needs to strengthen its profile as a professional body. AESOP needs to mobilize its resources taking a leading role and entering its expertise into ongoing debates and initiatives regarding planning education and planning qualification of future professionals. AESOP needs to promote this agenda with politicians and all other key stakeholders (and actors) in place development and management across Europe.
- 2) AESOP sees planning as an indispensable profession for the development of spatial quality and sustainable territories in Europe. AESOP needs to promote and communicate the value of its profession in the public realm. AESOP intends to improve the spatial literacy of citizens and politicians alike, to better understand the spatiality of daily life and achieve visionary and transformative action.
- 3) AESOP is much concerned about how to achieve spatial quality and sustainable territories. AESOP needs to emphasise these aspects at the various levels and arenas concerned, from the local, city, regional, national, to finally the European and trans-European level.
- 4) AESOP stresses the diversity of the planning profession and therefore sees the attempts towards a harmonization of planning education in the course of the Bologna-Process as having positive and negative effects at the same time. AESOP welcomes the opportunities of enhanced mobility and a better comparison of programmes. AESOP's main concern however is the quality of the education. AESOP sees as a core qualification of planners the application of their knowledge about place quality and sustainable territories to situate and contextualise, develop and manage planning projects in a responsible way and to achieve and realise appropriate and satisfactory solutions in participative processes.
- 5) AESOP sees the 'art and science'¹¹ of planning as a complex expertise. To develop this, a strong relation with planning practice is indispensable for

¹¹ Referring to definition of planning by the Royal Town Planning Institute.

planning education. As an academic field, planning clearly has an applied science character, providing a particular stimulus due to its multi-disciplinary approach bringing together different intellectual traditions and concepts. In planning education we therefore need to make sure that students can learn in practice situations at an early stage. As a scientific endeavour, we need to work towards innovative new solutions in cooperation with day to day planning practice.



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ECTP – Professional Standards for Planners in 2010?

Jan Vogelij
President European Council of Town Planners (ECTP)

ECTP regroups the national associations of spatial planning professionals in the countries of the Council of Europe. It has 27 members, but does not completely cover the EU. However, grossly ECTP can be seen as representing the national professional organisations of spatial planners in the EU. ECTP is the connection point for the spatial planning professionals with the European Commission and the EU. It organises every two years the European Urban and Regional Planning awards, the Biennials for Towns and Town planners (supporting the permanent international working party) and other events and conferences.(sometimes at the request of the Commission)

The ECTP is in contact with DGMarket about establishing the common platform for planners since 2003 and during that period confusion about definitions of “regulation” and what the Commission wants took a lot of time. Also within ECTP, personal changes formed a handicap in terms of time. A first thing we did was to find out what the EU exactly meant by regulation, and to see what the situation in the different countries is.

The common platforms have been introduced by the EU in the General Services Directive (DGMarket) as an instrument to enable the free movement of professionals throughout Europe. Even though the urgency in terms of time pressure of a common platform for the planning profession may be relative¹², we should not underestimate the amount of work that has to be put into it. For that reason, it is important to act now.

Besides its positive effects for professional mobility, a common platform will be very important to reinforce the planning profession. A characteristic of planning in Europe (in comparison with other professions) is its fragmentation because of different national legislation, cultures of governance, institutional contexts and situations concerning planning practice as well as education. A common platform will be helpful to make planning more recognisable (as an illustration: spatial planning has many different names in different countries of the EU, unlike, for example, architecture).

The question whether we want to be regulated is another one. Planning is not regulated at the European level, there is no 'sectoral regulation' such as for architecture or medical professions. The European Commission has decided not to regulate other sectors in that way anymore. The spatial planning profession as a result, is falling under the General Services Directive.

Spatial planning is regulated in different ways in a certain number of countries. This is important, because the European Commission takes the national regulation as a starting point. They do not want to impose their regulation. As a result, the situation is very complicated and fragmented.

But as I said, the question of the common platform goes beyond the question of regulation. By working on a common platform, we can specify what planning is, and what constitutes its common core throughout the different European countries. This will allow us to reinforce the profession. As such, the process of working on the common platform is probably more important than its direct outcomes.

In order to work towards a common framework, a necessary first step is to refresh the actual criteria for the planning profession. The current criteria date from 1995, and it has taken ECTP a long time to elaborate and agree upon them. Several

¹² See presentation of Anna Geppert at the AESOP HoD meeting in Leuven, 14-04-07

universities refer nowadays to that Common Core of the profession and for instance the regulation office for the spatial planners in France applies the criteria.

Since 1995 society and the planning profession have evolved a lot. Therefore the ECTP initiated a large discussion among the European planning associations about planning policy objectives and planning principles in order to meet the requirements of the city of the XXIst century. The resulting 'New Charter of Athens 2003', the ECTP's vision for cities of the XXIst century, promoting the concept of "the Connected City, has been agreed upon in October 2003. For this new document, the reference to the 'classical' Charter of Athens was used to illustrate that this 'new' charter is a real break with the past. The ideas of what planning should be in the current society are very different from the ones on which the 'classical' Charter of Athens was built (then mainly by architects). There now is a new and fundamentally different charter underlying the activity of spatial planning.

This New Charter of Athens 2003 is a good starting point for the AESOP action to refresh the criteria which define the profession of spatial planning, because it has been unanimously approved and adopted by all the national associations of planning professionals.

In order to proceed with the platform, the ECTP is investigating the existence of barriers between countries. A first survey has been carried out. The outcomes of this survey, which need to be refined, will be taken further in order to provide evidence of the existence of barriers for mobility of planners between European countries. DGMarket has explicitly asked us to provide them with an assessment of the actual situation with regard to the free movement of professionals. ECTP has already agreed upon the definition of what a spatial planner is (spring 2006), one of the other requirements of the EC DGMarket

But these are only first steps, and we should really not underestimate the work that is required for the elaboration of a common platform for the planning profession. The fragmentation mentioned above really is an important handicap.

What AESOP can do in that respect is to provide, from the planning education point of view, a reflection upon what planning is and establish what the minimum requirements are (the common core of the actually extremely different educations in planning).

On top of that it is necessary to analyze which extra requirements the topical planning practice, according to the New Charter of Athens 2003, sets for educating planners. The documents Dominique Lancrenon prepared for the common platform contain a first formulation, which resulted from work in the ECTP done by Robin Thompson and Paulo Correia. The requirements should be formulated in terms of competences of planners, as outcomes of the education and not in terms of input.

The results of such an exercise, which we hope AESOP might provide on the basis of an investigation among its members, can be an important input for the platform. Then efforts can concentrate upon establishing the compensating measures for working in a country different from the country of one's education. These activities can very well coincide with the ones which AESOP envisages for its quality assessment.

ECTP really wants to take this further and thinks that it is very important to do this in collaboration with AESOP.



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Reflecting upon the AERAU network and its twenty years of experience

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For those who speak French, you know that the name APERAU, which is the name of a very serious association, refers also to a joke, because it sounds like "APERO", the moment of pleasure, in France, when you have a drink just before the dinner: the guys who founded APERAU, and found the name, were very funny... Each time we have to explain what APERAU is, to people not involved in planning, we spend five minutes with the joke: so, now that is done, and we can speak seriously. The name is now fairly well known by the professionals, we have kept it, and we assume totally this funny side of the name, as a sort of French touch of humour.

1) The foundation:

APERAU was founded in 1984. It gathers together 17 schools and curricula of urban planning, town and country planning in France: 6 in Paris (IUP, IFU, Sc.Po, Paris-Sorbonne 1 et 4, Ecole nationale de Ponts et Chaussées), Lyon, Grenoble, Aix-en-Provence, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Nantes, Rennes, Reims, Lille.

In the middle of the 90's, the French association decided to open up towards the French-speaking curricula and schools outside France, thus becoming an international association: Schools in Brussels, Montreal, Laval, Quebec, Tunis, Rabat, Beyrouth joined the network.

In France, except IUP and IFU, in Paris, founded in the first half of the twentieth century, the curricula in planning mainly appeared in the 70's and the 80's. This period corresponds, in France, to the new interest of the universities in professional curricula, in opposition to the traditional approach founded on a scientific field, without regards to the labour market for the students.

In our field, the words used to name these curricula, more or less corresponding to "planning" in English, are, in French, « *Aménagement* », « *Aménagement du territoire* », « *Environnement* », « *urbanisme* », « *développement des territoires* », the latter in a different meaning from the English word « Development », or a mix of all these terms.

2) Why was this association created ? What is APERAU aiming at?

One of the reasons for the foundation of APERAU was to identify these new curricula, and the old ones (IFU, IUP) who joined the movement.

Often, at the beginning, these curricula appeared parallel to those in Geography, classical Geography, the main vocation of which was to prepare the students to become teachers in geography and history, and not to be planners, even if a lot became planners in the 60's.

But some academics, often geographers, but also biologists, sociologists or lawyers, thought that it was possible to create new curricula, gathering different fields and proposing new academic practices in specific programmes. In the 70's, proposals from the State of new diplomas, such as the "*Maîtrise de Sciences et Technologies*" (4 years after the Bac), and the *D.E.S.S.* in the 80's (5 years after the Bac), offered to the universities the opportunity to create these new programmes in planning. Of course, these new curricula were not created against traditional fields, for instance Geography, but to offer diplomas adapted to the expected skill in planning. For instance in Lille, our planning department, IAUL, has been created inside the faculty of Geography and Planning. Sometime, a few local conflicts occurred in the 70's, but they are now over.

Relationships were developed by these academics with professionals, and specifically with the ministry of planning and urban development (*Ministère de*

*l'Equipe*ment in French), who wanted to promote the education of new professionals, using good practices in the specific field of planning. It was all the more necessary, because in the 80's in France, the decentralisation process gave a lot of new power to the local authorities to create a lot of jobs for young professionals. The university had the opportunity to form these young professionals.

But the professionals, and above all the ministry, required a guarantee in the way of teaching, linking theory and practical approach. So, the second reason for the foundation of APERAU was to provide this guarantee, thanks to a charter which aimed at creating a framework for the programmes with several principles.

3) The charter and the principles.

This charter was written after consultation with the professionals, who use it to define the required skill for the new professionals. For instance, a body, the office for qualification of urban planners (OPQU), uses the principles of APERAU to qualify the new planners. And the French representatives in the European Council of Planners can refer to our principles to contribute to the definition of the required skills of planners in Europe.

3.1) The members share, as the basic elements of the Charter:

- the use of French in teaching
- a common philosophy for academic choices
- the concern of linking research and teaching.

3.2.) The evaluation : furthermore, APERAU manages a process of evaluation of the programmes, to control the application of the charter. In order to be a full member, evaluation is required; if not the schools are associate members. For instance, this is the case for the schools in North African countries. Now in France, all the members are full-members, and very recently a new applicant, in Rennes, has joined APERAU.

Because of the implementation of the Bologna process, now totally implemented in France, we had to adapt the charter and stop for a period the process of evaluation. Since 2006, the process has started again. Each year two or three schools are visited.

3.3.) The principles :

1. Quality and coherence of teaching:
2. Promotion of the identity of the field of planning, especially concerning the name of the academic programmes.
3. Promotion of common knowledge (culture) and multidisciplinary studies throughout the different curricula.
4. To implement programmes with:
 - a multidisciplinary approach to teaching
 - a collective workshop, if possible on topics proposed by professional and/or political bodies: a real study, not a subject given by the professors.
 - an internship (training period) in private or public sector, but with a real mission
 - the production of a dissertation – often linked with the subject of the mission of the internship
- 5- A staff composed of academics from different fields (geography, economy, sociology, law, political studies, history, engineer...), and especially from planning, AND professional planners. Professionals are not part of the permanent staff. Sometimes the permanent staff can be reduced and complemented with external professors and professionals.
6. At the level of the master, especially in the last year, we emphasise the recruitment of students coming from different fields such as : planning, of course, architecture, geography, political sciences, economy, sociology... because the job of a planner has many facets and needs different backgrounds, due to the variety of the missions : economic planning, neighbourhood policies, urban design...
7. To promote the research in the field of planning as an aim to enrich teaching.

4) Brief approach of the methodology of evaluation through a few criteria concerning the masters level:

The programmes are organised with credits (ECTS : One year = 60 ECTS).

- These credits, attained by the students, correspond to **a varied way of teaching and practices**: lessons, applied works, seminars, workshops, internship, field trips, individual thesis, collective thesis...
- The credits correspond to **four great categories of courses**

- credits for courses concerning general (cultural) knowledge applied for planning, such as urban history, urban geography, urban sociology.

- credits for courses concerning specific knowledge of planning, for example urban policies, neighbourhood and social development, urban design, analysis of the stakeholders of planning...

a minimum of 30 credits out of 120 is required for these two categories

- credits for courses concerning professional skills specific to planning, for instance management of urban project, elaboration of diagnostics, implementation of the documents of planning...

- credits for courses concerning tools used in the professional field, such as G.I.S., methodology of social enquiry, infography...

a minimum of 60 credits out of 120 is required for these two categories (often corresponding to the workshop and internship)

The last 30 credits (/120) depend on the needs of each school.

The evaluation is done by a team of three individuals, two academics and one professional. The team spends generally one day or, more often, one and half day, in the school. It meets the staff, the students, and analyses a report prepared by the school with all the necessary information (official documents sent to the ministry to be appointed by the state, description of the programmes...).

It has to verify the existence of the academic practices recommended in the charter, specifically the workshop and the internship, which must be of a minimum of three months. Furthermore, it verifies the balanced repartition of credits (ECTS) between the different categories of teaching, as we previously saw.

If the programme is conceived on a basis of 120 credits (2 years), a student can be admitted in the last year (given that he already has 60 credits from a relevant background such as architecture, urban geography or political sciences (with a background in urban policies)...

5) The lessons from the APERAU Experiment.

- More than 20 years of existence.

- Certainly, in the French university system, APERAU is a unique example of organisation and self evaluation of an academic field.

- A collective improvement of academic practices due to the exchange between the schools and their individual projects exists.
- There is a homogeneity of practices and programmes, even if each school can develop its own identity
- The students benefit from a Common label to enter the labour market, recognised by the profession.
- APERAU is also a scientific network, answering to proposals of research coming from different bodies, such as recently the DIACT (formerly DATAR).
- Lastly APERAU is an intermediate between the French schools of planning and AESOP: the fees for AESOP are collected by APERAU, in addition to its own fees, and are paid globally to AESOP. Our representatives can diffuse the information from AESOP in the APERAU network.



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ACSP – Preparing professional standards in education from a US perspective

Simin Davoudi
AESOP past president

Some time ago, ACSP held its annual “administrators conference”, which is the ACSP equivalent of AESOP’s HoD meeting. Simin Davoudi was invited to talk about the Bologna Survey¹³. On this occasion, there was very interesting feedback from the Americans on the Bologna process. Some key points of their remarks:

- The Bologna process is important because it has induced an important intellectual debate on curricula and so on.
- The process is interesting because it is a step towards harmonisation of the planning discipline.
- The process will probably enhance students and staff mobility in Europe and even outside. The fact that there are more and more English language courses everywhere is considered by ACSP as a positive evolution, and as a sign of this increasing international exchange.

¹³ The powerpoint presentation used on this occasion can be downloaded at the AESOP website.

- The Bologna process is considered to improve “cross-national learning” between European countries (leading maybe to an insularisation of the US planning discipline).

The issue of accreditation and of professional recognition of the planning profession was addressed in a parallel session at the conference. In addition, there was a very interesting discussion of a procedure which is being developed in the US to measure the performance of planning schools. The planning schools united in ACSP have decided to take on this quality assessment by themselves, in order to do it on their own terms.

The planning school assessment programme they are putting into place aims at assessing “the faculty” (academic staff), the students, and the reputation of the schools. It concerns all the accredited planning programmes. It should provide an objective view of the quality of all these programmes. One of its central aims is to give a stronger position to the planning schools in their universities. It is equally aimed at improving the image of planning in general, among others in order to attract more good students.

In order to do this, the performance of academic staff will be measured. The objective is to develop some new criteria for that. The information that comes out of the assessment has to be publicly available and can then be used for comparison of schools.

The data sources that are going to be used include for example:

- Nationally collected data (numbers of students, etc.)
- Databases on academic staffs performance (citation Index and the like)
- Data from ACSP’s own accreditation service
- Data on scholarships etc.

This generally available data is completed by two surveys (questionnaires):

- Among heads of departments: Basic data about facts and figures, location of the planning discipline in the universities hierarchy, “location data” (where do students come from, where do they go), ...

- Among the academic staff: Questions concerning activities of staff (not only publications but also activities outside university such as membership of associations, other professional activities, etc.).

A problem which is signalled is the difficulty of conducting a balanced and objective comparison of schools that takes into account their diversity. The solution that is found is to avoid aggregating the information and giving scores. The information that is gathered will be collected and presented in a disaggregate way. It is then up to the potential student or staff to make their own decision. However, this does not completely take away all the negative aspects of this kind of performance measurement. These negative elements concern for example unhealthy competition between schools. Also, given that the assessment is not compulsory, schools can decide simply not to take part.

There are however a number of positive points in the ACSP experience. These are related to a growing awareness of the quality of the planning education and of ways in which to obtain a high quality, and to the diversity of sources that is used to measure the performance of the schools.

ACSP's experience will provide a valuable source for AESOP's attempts to measure excellence amongst its member schools.



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**Professional recognition of planners in Europe and its impact on planning
education**
– state of art, issues at stake

Anna Geppert
AESOP Vice secretary general

The origin of this presentation lies in the fact that some time ago, the rumour went that there would be a European directive which would define the planning profession, which was planned for 2010. This appeared not to be true, so there is no immediate necessity to engage in the elaboration of such a directive.

Because planning is not a regulated profession at the European level, it is up to us to decide whether we want to, and on which terms we want to engage in such a process. Initially, the directive mentioned a deadline for this procedure (October 20th, 2007).

Today, it appears that this deadline is no longer binding. However, working on a process of recognition of the planning profession at the European level may appear as a great opportunity to strengthen the value both of the profession and our diplomas. My presentation will enlighten:

1. The context: what are the European rules for professional recognition?

2. The procedure to follow if planners want to engage in a process of recognition
3. Pros and cons: some reflections on constraints benefits of such a process

1. The context : European rules for professional recognition

The European directive « Bolkenstein » (*DIRECTIVE 2005/36/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of September 7th 2005* on the recognition of professional qualifications aims at:

- Improving mobility of European workers (freedom of establishment):

(3)

The guarantee conferred by this Directive on persons having acquired their professional qualifications in a Member State to have access to the same profession and pursue it in another Member State with the same rights as nationals is without prejudice to compliance by the migrant professional with any non-discriminatory conditions of pursuit which might be laid down by the latter Member State, provided that these are objectively justified and proportionate.

- Facilitating crossborder service provision:

(4)

In order to facilitate the free provision of services, there should be specific rules aimed at extending the possibility of pursuing professional activities under the original professional title. In the case of information society services provided at a distance, the provisions of Directive 2000/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2000 on certain legal aspects of information society services, in particular electronic commerce, in the Internal Market (4), should also apply.

For this purpose, regulated professions may establish a general system of recognition of qualifications :

(11)

In the case of the professions covered by the general system for the recognition of qualifications, hereinafter referred to as 'the general system', Member States should retain the right to lay down the minimum level of qualification required to ensure the quality of the services provided on their territory. However, pursuant to Articles 10, 39 and 43 of the Treaty, they should not require a national of a Member State to obtain qualifications, which they generally lay down only in terms of the diplomas awarded under their national educational system, where the person concerned has already obtained all or part of those qualifications in another Member State. As a result, it should be laid down that any host Member State in which a profession is regulated must take account of the qualifications obtained in another Member State and assess whether they correspond to those which it requires. The general system for recognition, however, does not prevent a Member State from making any person pursuing a profession on its territory subject to specific requirements due to the application of professional rules justified by the general public interest. Rules of this kind relate, for example, to organisation of the profession, professional standards, including those concerning ethics, and supervision and liability. Lastly, this Directive is not intended to interfere with Member States' legitimate interest in preventing any of their citizens from evading enforcement of the national law relating to professions.

The planning profession is a **regulated profession** in several member states. Therefore it **may** be considered relevant to the Directive. However, in many other member states, planners are not regulated. Therefore, by today, no official work has been undertaken at the European level in order to establish a recognition of the qualification of Planner.

2. The procedure for a possible recognition:

The European Community has no wish or competence to harmonise or standardise a profession. Its only concern is to see whether there are legal barriers, preventing people to work in other countries. As a result, a first thing to do if we want to engage in European harmonisation, is to prove that there are barriers between the countries hampering mobility. If this cannot be proved, the issue of professional recognition is not part of the competencies of the EU.

If such barriers exist, stakeholders (professional organisations of any kind, for example ECTP or AESOP) can come to the Commission with the proposal for a “common platform”.

Such a common platform consists of two things:

- Minimum standards (core requirements): what should a planner have to be entitled to work as a planner in Europe. These minimum standards list items such as the minimum level of education, professional experience, etc.
- Compensatory measures: more demanding countries are allowed to ask more than the minimum standards. Compensatory measures list these additional competencies that a person coming from another country has to fulfil to work as a planner in such a country. This concerns things such as additional education, ...

It is important to bear in mind that minimum standards and compensatory measures cannot be “made up”. They have to be the actual pre-requisites in at least 2/3 of the member states (18 countries). There is no place to develop an “ideological”, or even ideal, definition of what the planning profession should be. The approach is necessarily pragmatic and evidence-based. Therefore, our state of knowledge based on recent surveys of AESOP and ECTP is not sufficient and would have to be completed in order to elaborate such a platform..

In next stages, a proposal of a common platform has to be:

- Completed in cooperation with the European Commission (DG Internal market);
- Sent to all member states, where it is assessed by national experts (so if we engage into this procedure, it is strategic to be prepared to provide national experts).
- Negotiated by the European Commission and the member states.
- Formally approved through the EU decision making procedure (co-decision, involving a proposal by the Commission and a double approval of European Parliament and Council of Ministers).

The whole procedure takes circa three years.

When a common platform has been established, it becomes mandatory in all member states. This means that it has strong effects both on the profession and on the educational systems which have to take on board these concerns. As a comparison, it might be good to keep in mind that the Bologna statement was only a recommendation, and thus was not mandatory (yet was quite efficient in producing effects...).

ECTP is willing to engage these works towards a recognition of Planners at the European level and considers AESOP as a major partner for such a challenge.

3. Should we go for it? Some reflections on pros and cons:

My personal opinion is that pros are much more numerous and significant than cons. Actually, there is only one “con” - meaning both “contra” and “condition”: taking this path does mean an important commitment and a real work. The pros are on two levels. The first is “lobbying”, in the sense of taking an active role in the recognition of the role of planners. The second is to deepen our own knowledge of European planning education (deepening works which already have been started in AESOP), in order to be able to promote planning education and role of planners.

On the “lobbying” side, this question has provided an opportunity to establish a very positive contact with the European Commission : let's not loose it. Although there is no urgent necessity to work towards a common platform, we must keep in mind that the process is open to all representative bodies. If we do not do it, others might do and AESOP would loose the initiative. Therefore, it seems appropriate to keep on track in order to “keep the lead”.

At the same time, the contact with the European Commission may provide us support in putting down the barriers planners experience in some countries – such as the reservation of some activities of our field to engineers, for instance in Italy or in several eastern European countries. As a matter of fact, it is necessary to work at the European level to overcome national barriers. The reason is that the European Union has no right to intervene in the definition of a profession for itself (this is a national competence). BUT, if the national frames create unjustified barriers hampering the mobility of professionals from one member state to another, the the European Commission is entitled to act, including to sue the case at the European court of Justice.

As an example, if a French planner who wants to work in Italy is refused because he is not an architect, that decision can be challenged in the European court. A positive decision of the court would then have the same consequences for Italian planners – and increase the value of our diplomas.

Engaging this process also leads to improve our knowledge of European regulations and of European planning education.

First, it is of interest to mention that the sketch of a common platform (combination of minimum standards and compensatory measures) is likely to fit the situation of planning practice and education in Europe, because it does leave sufficient place for the diversity of the profession, to which AESOP is attached. So the vehicle is a good one for taking further the work already done by AESOP.

The necessary complementary work that has to be done in order to elaborate a common platform would lead to develop an in-depth knowledge of professional accreditation rules in the member states and education systems (duration and contents of studies). This knowledge is necessary for a formal recognition of planners at the European level.

However, the same knowledge may also be used for other purposes:

- promoting our common values, for instance by setting an AESOP “label”. Today, new members are assessed according to AESOP's core requirements defined in 1995. The example of APERAU¹⁴ shows that a label policy may have very strong positive impacts when carried on.
- providing us with a set of criteria (refreshing and getting further into details of the core requirements of 1995) if AESOP intends to take an active role in accreditation / assessment of planning programs (as RTPI does successfully in the UK).

To make a short conclusion, I would like to mention the example of the European Federation of National Engineering Associations (FEANI). This association went through the all the steps of elaborating a common platform. At the end of the process, a legal recognition did not appear useful. Instead, FEANI used the works done to create a strong label, of European dimension.

The EUR ING title delivered by FEANI is designed as a guarantee of competence for professional engineers, in order :

- to facilitate the movement of practicing engineers within and outside the geographical area represented by FEANI's member countries and to establish

¹⁴ See the presentation of APERAU representative Didier Paris at the AESOP HoD meeting on 14-04-07 in Leuven.

a framework of mutual recognition of qualifications in order to enable engineers who wish to practice outside their own country to carry with them a guarantee of competence

- to provide information about the various education systems of individual engineers for the benefit of prospective employers
- to encourage the continuous improvement of the quality of engineers by setting, monitoring and reviewing standards

It would not have been possible to establish this label without the in-depth analysis realised when working towards European recognition. Although at the end of the process this formal recognition was not asked, the European Commission still quotes FEANI as an example of a strong methodological approach and good practice. Moreover, the European Commission has recognized the FEANI Register and the EUR ING title as valuable tools for the recognition of national diplomas among Member States (see below).

In my view, the time has come for planners to work for a European recognition and AESOP, together with professional bodies, are our very best tools for this.

Statement from the European Commission on FEANI

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3429/93 by Christian Rovsing (PPE) to the Commission (2 December 1993 - 94/C 268/72)

Question:

FEANI, The European Federation of National Engineering Associations has set up a 'Register of EUR ING' with the aim of facilitating free movement of engineers by means of mutual recognition of professional qualifications. The minimum requirements for admission to the register are:

- Full secondary education,
- Training extended over 7 years, including at least 3 years' theoretical education at university level in an establishment recognized by FEANI and two years of assessed engineering professional experience.

The requirements are thus higher than the requirements laid down in the general Directive. Applicants for registration must be recommended by their National Association and accepted by the European Monitoring Committee before obtaining the FEANI title EUR ING (European Engineer). More than 16.000 engineers have (October 1993) received the title EUR ING.

Does the Commission feel that this kind of initiative, the only one so far among the professions concerned in the general directive, may facilitate the free circulation of

professionals in the EEC countries, and to what extent could the FEANI title facilitate the recognition of national diplomas among Member States?

Answer:

given by Mr. Vanni d'Archirafi on behalf of the Commission (10 march 1994)

The Commission has followed the work of the FEANI (The European Federation of European Engineering Associations) and in particular, its creation of the EUR ING register with great interest over the years. The Commission considers that the FEANI scheme is an excellent example of self-regulation by a profession at European level and it provides a model for other professional groups in the technical and scientific sector, such as chemists and physicists.

The FEANI register recognizes and builds upon the diversity of forms of engineering education, which exist in the Community and can adapt to any changes, which may be decided upon at national level. The procedures for dealing with applications for registration also provide a good respective expertise.

Although the EUR ING title cannot itself be considered as a 'diploma' within the meaning of Article 1(a) of Council Directive 89/48/EEC of 21 December 1988 on a general system for the recognition of higher education diplomas (1), it may nevertheless be of assistance to the competent national authorities when they examine a request for recognition under Article 3 of the Directive. Registration on the FEANI register indicates that, whatever the duration or content of his or her initial training, the engineer has reached a certain level of professional competence, certified by his or her peers both at national and European level. Bearing in mind that Member States are required by the caselaw of the Court (2) to take post-diploma professional experience (3) into consideration, when reaching their decision on recognition, the Commission considers that an engineer who has obtained the title of EUR INGs should not normally be required to undertake an adaptation period or sit an aptitude test, as provided for in Article 4 of Directive 89/48/EEC.

(1) OJ No. L 19 du 24. 1. 1989.

(2) Cf. Case C-340/89, Vlassopoulou (1989), ECR -I-2357.

(3) Cf. reply to Written Question No. 2790/93.

Official Journal of the European Communities - Information and Notices -C 268 Volume 37 / No. C 268/38 / English edition



AESOP Head of Department Meeting
Towards professional recognition for the planning profession in Europe

14 April 2007
Leuven, Belgium

Report of discussion groups

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AESOP Junior Vice-President

This report tries to bring together the discussions held during the Heads of Department Meeting (HoD) in Leuven. The account tries to capture the main points raised in the working groups. It shall stimulate the further discussion amongst member schools. Any omission and shortcoming should be reported to Roelof Verhage.

Two parallel group discussions were organised during the afternoon of the AESOP HoD meeting in Leuven. Each group was asked to elaborate a limited number of key observations and reflections and key action points for AESOP concerning three central issues:

- Professional standards and core-requirements;
- Accreditation experiences and potential role of AESOP;
- Common platform and professional recognition at EU level.

During the discussions, the elaboration of separate action points for the three issues did not appear to be useful. Therefore in the synthesis below, the different reflections are presented separately, and then the action points for AESOP are taken together.

Observations and reflections

Professional standards and core-requirements

The first question that has to be raised is: why should AESOP want to engage into a procedure of fixing professional standards and core-requirements? Two possible answers were given to this question. The first one is a 'defensive' one: if AESOP does not engage in this procedure, other organisations might do so, in which case AESOP would lose the initiative. It is in the interest of the planning schools to proactively engage in the procedure in order to keep things in their own hands.

Even though the validity of this 'defensive' answer was widely recognised, it was not seen as very satisfactory. It would be better if AESOP seized this opportunity in a positive way. There are good reasons for this, for example reinforcement of the profession, quality assurance of planning schools, stimulating reflection upon how to improve planning education.

In a general sense, engaging in the elaboration of professional standards and core requirements was seen as a necessary activity for AESOP. But it was also mentioned that we really need to be clear upon why we need a common platform, because it might also work as a fence around our discipline, which is not what we want. To summarise the discussions, the general answer to the question whether AESOP should engage in the process towards professional recognition is: YES BUT:

- cautiously and actively support the activities leading towards EU professional recognition;
- understand this should be gradual (and long-term) process; and following from that
- take control over the speed and character of the process.

Some elements that will probably be of increased importance in planning education in the future, and that should be part of the "core of planning" have been mentioned:

- fluid borders between planning and other disciplines (architecture, landscape design & planning;
- more integrative jobs;
- emphasise problem definitions;

- shift from government to governance, which requires mediating/negotiating or moderating planners;
- sustainability approach;
- uniqueness of place.

In trying to define the “core” of the planning discipline, it is important to take into account that the planning profession, or at least the activity of planning is very much “context dependent”. As a consequence, core requirements cannot be static, as planning evolves with the context. Also, when trying to define the core requirements for a planner, it should not be forgotten that many countries have their own requirements (issued for example by APERAU in France, or by RTPI in the UK), which work perfectly well. AESOP should not aim at reinventing these existing mechanisms.

Accreditation experiences and potential role of AESOP

RTPI and APERAU show clear examples of how self imposed quality assessment can be successful. This shows how accreditation can be valuable. The question of the advantage of having an AESOP ‘label’ or quality mark of planning accreditation can nevertheless be raised. The answer to this question seems to contain two central elements:

- Such a label would have an important symbolic value in a certain number of countries where the planning profession is not very strong.
- It would allow graduates in planning to move more easily across Europe.

By way of example, some ideas for the types of criteria that could be used for accreditation were mentioned:

- density of activity;
- balance;
- staff activities (theory, practice and teaching);
- report between theoretical and practical education;
- core vs. specialisation; and
- social, economic, environmental aspects

In a general sense, it was mentioned that any assessments should mainly be based on “learning outcomes”, and not on input. In other words, the focus should be on competences, not on how these can be achieved.

There is a limit to this type of accreditation at a European level. Planners operate in different (national) planning systems and cultures. A system of accreditation at the European level can harmonise education, but not the planning systems and cultures. Moreover, we need to be aware that strong and rigid criteria for planning schools may exclude some schools, or even some regions of Europe.

Common platform and professional recognition

European accreditation and directives mainly concern professions which are regulated, such as medical professions or architecture. The question is to see whether this is also necessary for planning. The ECTP survey seems to show that some sort of regulation is necessary, because planners cannot move freely in Europe. This, however, needs to be worked out further.

The elaboration of a common platform for the planning discipline in Europe would have a certain number of advantages. Many of them have already been mentioned: Its existence would make it easier for graduates in planning to find a job throughout Europe; it would guarantee the comparative quality of planning education; it would increase the professional status of planning; and it would enhance the position of ECTP and AESOP as representatives of the planning discipline in Europe.

However, the drawbacks of a common platform should not be ignored. The existence of such a platform might weaken the position of non-standard patterns of education (combination of generic pre-graduate plus planning master; baccalaureate in planning only, etc.), and it might jeopardise some regions and even some countries that have no local opportunity to educate EU-recognised planners. In addition, it can be questioned whether a common platform, with its core requirements in the form of ‘minimum standards’ is the right place for a real reflection upon the future of planning education. The development of a ‘vision’ of the future of planning education should probably be separated from the establishment of ‘core requirements’.

In any case, we need to keep in mind that a common platform for the planning profession does not aim at standardisation. It aims at enabling mobility between

European countries. If for that reason standardisation is required, then we have to do that.

In this delicate balance of pros and cons, AESOP has to define its strategy and accordingly its actions.

AESOP strategy and actions

The general feeling is that AESOP should move forward towards standards for professional recognition of the planning discipline. However, it should avoid doing that only for defensive reasons. It is important that AESOP defines a proper policy in this field. In order to do so, simultaneous action on two tracks is necessary:

- Identification, analysis and synthesis of what exists in terms of definitions/descriptions of the planning discipline, and of core requirements (e.g. ECTP, ISOCARP, EU, AESOP, APERAU, RTPI, ...)
- Development of a policy document setting out precise objectives that AESOP wants to obtain via a process towards professional recognition (e.g. creating an identity for planning where this does not exist; removing barriers for professional mobility between countries; give support in accreditation procedures in different countries; increase the status of planning, ...). The central idea should be to support schools in particular countries to improve their planning education, respecting national profiles of planning profession and planning education

There is a momentum created by the Bologna process. This should be used in order to further reflect upon our position. To profit from this momentum, it is important not to lose too much time in ideological debates, but to be pragmatic: the objective should not be how to protect our position, but how to promote it. The process towards professional recognition is a good opportunity to launch a shared reflection upon the future of the planning profession in Europe, and the contribution of the planning schools to this. The occasion to have a large consultation among the AESOP members should be seized. The overall aim should be to establish criteria that would help to 'climb the ladder' rather than restrict and exclude.

To summarise, AESOP needs to define a strategy or a policy which aims at strengthening the profile of planning; at communicating the value of planning; at defining core (minimum) requirements for planners (in a non-cumulative way). The

issue of the establishment of a common platform at EU level should be addressed in this wider policy. Concrete action points in order to elaborate this policy are the following:

- set up a working party with ECTP;
- include other organisations (ISOCARP)
- invite for participation and further debate
- continue the “ground work” (continue Bologna, continue research assessment).